

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

1. (Currently Amended) A releasably-securable adjustable gastric band for the treatment of obesity suitable for laparoscopic placement around the stomach of a patient, and suitable for laparoscopic removal from said stomach, comprising:

a tail end;

a head end having an aperture structured to allow a first part of said tail end to be drawn through said ~~head end~~ aperture to position a second part of said tail end within said head end such that said head end encircles said second part of said tail end;

a releasable locking means including a tooth and a notch structured to engage said tooth to releasably secure said head end to said tail end when said first part of said tail end is drawn through said ~~head end~~ aperture, to thereby releasably secure said releasably-securable adjustable gastric band in an encircling position around said patient's stomach; and

a release tab positioned on said head end and structured to allow said releasable locking means to release said tail end from said head end when a force is applied to said release tab.

2. (Currently Amended) The releasably-securable gastric band of claim 1, wherein said ~~releasable locking means includes a tooth~~ is formed on a portion of said tail end.

3. (Currently Amended) The releasably-securable gastric band of claim 2, wherein said ~~releasable locking means includes a notch~~ is in said head end for engaging said tooth.

4.-5. (Cancelled).

6. (Currently Amended) The releasably-securable gastric band of claim [[4]] 1, wherein application of said force to said release tab in a direction substantially perpendicular to a central axis of said releasably-securable adjustable gastric band allows said tooth to disengage from said notch so as to allow the release of said tail end from said head end.

7. (Previously Presented) The releasably-securable gastric band of claim 1, further comprising a visual securing indicator.

8. (Previously Presented) The releasably-securable gastric band of claim 7, further comprising a window for providing positive visual indication when said head end and said tail end are releasably secured together.

9. (Currently Amended) The releasably-securable gastric band of claim 8, wherein said releasably-securable adjustable gastric band is releasably locked in place when said visual securing indicator appears in said window following insertion of said tail end into said head end.

10. (Previously Presented) The releasably-securable gastric band of claim 1, further comprising a tactile securing indicator.

11. (Previously Presented) The releasably-securable gastric band of claim 1, wherein said releasably-securable adjustable gastric band is adjustable via hydraulic inflation.

12. (Previously Presented) The releasably-securable gastric band of claim 11, further comprising an inflation tube.

13. (Previously Presented) The releasably-securable gastric band of claim 12, wherein said tail end comprises said inflation tube.

14. (Previously Presented) The releasably-securable gastric band of claim 12, wherein said head end comprises said inflation tube.

15. (Previously Presented) The releasably-securable gastric band of claim 1, wherein said releasably-securable adjustable gastric band is mechanically adjustable.

16. (Previously Presented) The releasably-securable gastric band of claim 1, wherein said releasably-securable adjustable gastric band is remotely adjustable.

17. (Withdrawn) A method of releasing a releasably-securable gastric band comprising the steps of:

grasping a release tab positioned on a head end of the gastric band;

applying force to the release tab in a direction substantially perpendicular to a central axis of the gastric band.

18. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 17, wherein the application of force causes a tooth portion of the gastric band to disengage from a notch portion of the gastric band to allow the release of the tail end from the head end.

19. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 18, further comprising a step of grasping a gripping land for holding the gastric band in preparation for said application of force step.

20. (Withdrawn) A method of forming a stoma in a patient comprising the steps of:  
surgically implanting a gastric band around the stomach of the patient;  
inserting a tail end of the gastric band into a head end of the gastric band;  
releasably securing the gastric band by drawing the tail end through the head end until an indicator formed on the tail end is visible in a window formed on the head end, wherein the gastric band can be released by applying force to a release tab formed on the gastric band in a direction substantially perpendicular to a central axis of the gastric band.

21. (Currently Amended) The releasably-securable gastric band of claim [[4]] 1, wherein application of said force to said release tab lifts said notch over said tooth to allow the release of said tail end from said head end.

22. (New) The releasably-securable gastric band of claim 1, wherein an inflation tube comprises said second part of said tail end.